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Diana T Fritz 05/24/2007 04:17:59 PM From DB/Inbox: Search Results

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SIPDIS
TELEGRAM

May 11, 2003

To: No Action Addressee
Action: Unknown
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 2300 - ROUTINE)
TAGS: PREL, OIIP, KPAO
Captions: None
Subject: DEPUTY SECRETARY'S REMARKS TEMPER CRITICISM OF US IN UAE PRESS
Ref: None

UNCLAS ABU DHABI 02300

SIPDIS
CXABU:
ACTION: PAO
INFO: POL AMB DCM ECON
Laser1:
ACTION: PAO

DISSEMINATION: PAO
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: CDA:RALBRIGHT
DRAFTED: PAO:TPONCE
CLEARED: PAO:KVANDEVATE

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DE RUEHAD #2300 1311404
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9904
INFO RUEHZM/GCC COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS ABU DHABI 002300

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DEPARTMENT FOR D; NEA/FO; NEA/PPD; NEA/ARP; NEA/RA;
IIP/G/NESA

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: KPAO PREL OIIP TC
SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY'S REMARKS TEMPER CRITICISM OF US IN UAE PRESS

¶1. SUMMARY: ON APRIL 18, PAO ARRANGED A TELEPHONE PRESS CONFERENCE (TPC) FOR THE DEPUTY SECRETARY WITH THE UAE'S MOST WIDELY READ PAN-ARAB ARABIC DAILY "AL-KHALEEJ" AND SISTER ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DAILY "GULF TODAY." BOTH CARRIED THE ENTIRE TEXT OF THE INTERVIEW ON SUNDAY, APRIL 20, 2003. THE D/S'S REMARKS ON SYRIA, THE ROADMAP, AND U.S. PLANS FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF IRAQ WERE USED IN SUBSEQUENT ARTICLES AND EDITORIALS AND HIGHLIGHTED BY OTHER UAE DAILIES AND REGIONAL SATELLITE TV CHANNELS. THIS EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW INJECTED BALANCE INTO AL KHLEEJ'S HARSH CONDEMNATIONS OF US FOREIGN POLICY AND INTENTIONS IN THE REGION. END SUMMARY.

¶2. ON APRIL 20, 2003, "AL-KHALEEJ" HEADLINED FRONT-PAGE EXCERPTS OF THE INTERVIEW. THE MAIN HEADLINES READ:

--"CONFIRMING THAT AMERICA WILL BE IN CHARGE OF IRAQ FOR A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME, ARMITAGE TELLS 'AL-KHALEEJ': SYRIA IS AT A CROSSROADS"
--"THE ROADMAP IS NOT SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATION OR BARGAINING"
--"THE UN ROLE IS VITAL, AND WE ARE NOT IN AGREEMENT WITH PERLE ON ELIMINATING ITS ROLE."

¶3. "AL-KHALEEJ" ALSO DEVOTED AN ENTIRE INSIDE PAGE TO THE FULL TRANSCRIPT OF DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE'S INTERVIEW. THE HEADLINES ON PAGE 12 READ:

--"ASSERTING THAT SYRIA MUST BE AWARE THAT THE SITUATION HAS CHANGED, POWELL WILL DISCUSS THE PROPOSAL TO ELIMINATE WMD FROM THE REGION WITH ASSAD"
--"ARMITAGE TELLS 'AL-KHALEEJ': WE WILL RULE IRAQ FOR A SHORT PERIOD AND HAVE NO LIST OF OTHER TARGETS."

¶4. ON THE SAME DAY, SISTER ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DAILY "GULF TODAY" POSTED AN ARTICLE ON THE INTERVIEW ON ITS FIRST PAGE WITH THE FULL TRANSCRIPT ON AN INSIDE PAGE. THE FRONT-PAGE HEADLINE READ: "NO TIMEFRAME FOR IRAQ: US WILL NOT DEPART WITHOUT ENSURING SECURITY, SAYS ARMITAGE," "PEACE 'ROAD MAP' IS NOT NEGOTIABLE," AND "US WILL NOT STAY IN IRAQ ONE DAY LONGER THAN NECESSARY."

¶5. THIS INTERVIEW HAD A BROAD IMPACT ON UAE AND REGIONAL MEDIA. OTHER UAE DAILIES AND THE THREE LEADING TELEVISION STATIONS MBC, ABU DHABI, AND AL-ARABIYYA PUBLISHED OR AIRED EXCERPTS OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY'S REMARKS. COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTED THE DEPUTY SECRETARY'S DENIAL THAT THE ROAD MAP WILL BE SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATION AND BARGAINING AND GENERALLY DESCRIBED THESE REMARKS AS A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT FOR A BREAKTHROUGH IN THE PEACE PROCESS. THE COVERAGE ALSO REPEATED THE DEPUTY SECRETARY'S COMMENT THAT "THE US PRESENCE IN IRAQ WILL

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NOT BE ONE DAY LONGER THAN NECESSARY". OVERALL, THE EMINENTLY QUOTABLE DEPUTY SECRETARY BROUGHT BALANCE AND OBJECTIVITY TO THE UAE MEDIA'S DEBATE ON IRAQ, THE ROADMAP, AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IN THE REGION.

¶6. COMMENT: SINCE THE CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES IN IRAQ, POST HAS NOTED AN INCREASED WILLINGNESS ON THE PART OF LOCAL MEDIA TO ENGAGE WITH US AND WITH USG OFFICIALS. THE DEPUTY SECRETARY'S INTERVIEW WAS THE FIRST SUCH INTERVIEW WE HAVE DONE WITH THE USUALLY ANTI-AMERICAN (BUT INFLUENTIAL) AL-KHALEEJ. IT PAVED THE WAY FOR AN INTERVIEW BY AL-KHALEEJ WITH AMBASSADOR WAHBA TWO WEEKS LATER, AGAIN, A FIRST OF ITS KIND. WE HAVE AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY AT THIS TIME TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS GREATER OPENNESS. WE ENCOURAGE THE DEPARTMENT TO MAINTAIN THE INCREASED LEVEL OF INTERVIEWS BY SENIOR USG OFFICIALS WITH THE ARAB MEDIA. END COMMENT

ALBRIGHT